



February 12, 2020

The Honourable Carla Qualtrough
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion
140 Promenade du Portage, Phase IV, 14th Floor
Gatineau, QC J8X 2K2

Dear Minister Qualtrough,

On behalf of Adopt4Life – Ontario's Association for kin, customary care, and adoptive parents and caregivers, and the Adoption Council of Canada, we are pleased to see the Prime Minister include the **introduction of a new 15-week protected leave for adoptive parents** as part of your mandate to strengthen the Employment Insurance program. We welcome this new benefit as a significant step forward in supporting new parents' successful return to the workforce, while also building strong, healthy attachment in families – no matter how they are formed.

The Adoption Council of Canada, Adopt4Life, and Western University have together advocated for the introduction of a new 15-week attachment benefits program for adoptive, kin, and customary care parents, through our **#TimeToAttach** campaign. We have shared the details of our research and recommendations with your staff and advisors, and invite you to consider our full findings and recommendations for attachment benefits here: <http://www.adopt4life.com/for-policymakers>.

Attachment is a human need and a critical component of a **healthy childhood** that, for many of our kids, has been disrupted due to inconsistent, harmful or absent caregiving. Many of the children in these families struggle with trauma, loss, and grief; often they also have complex medical and mental health challenges. Children and youth in our families – as well as their parents – are at **greater risk of mental health and other challenges throughout their lives**. Attachment is not adequately supported under the current regime of parental leave benefits (even with the recent changes). Ensuring that families in our community have the time needed to attach will support them in addressing any such issues as early as possible and most effectively.

Currently, our community is not eligible for the 15 weeks of maternity benefits that birth and surrogate mothers may access. Attachment benefits should be delivered in parallel to maternity benefits, which would recognize the unique challenges our families face, just as maternity benefits do for families formed through birth. Importantly, attachment benefits would provide parents and caregivers who are creating a permanent living situation for their children with a protected period of time to support attachment with the children who have recently joined their families.

Supporting solid attachment of children to their families is essential to enabling parents to remain in, or return to, the workforce. Many of our families must leave their employment to care for their children, a need that would be significantly lessened if they had adequate time to build their attachment while their employment was protected. Attachment benefits would provide many families with additional time to forge a strong bond at the outset of their new relationship and enable parents and caregivers to take advantage of career opportunities.

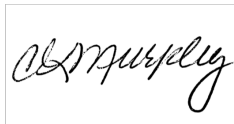
The creation of a new attachment benefits program has received bi-partisan support and endorsement from both the Liberal and Conservative parties, and importantly has the support of professionals across Canada in child welfare and protection, adoption and permanency, mental health, healthcare, social services, and many other sectors. We're pleased to share with you below a selection of the organizations and sectors, as well as individual professionals, who support the urgent recommendation for a new attachment benefits program.

On behalf of all of the stakeholders across Canada that support this change, we ask that your ministry recognize the value of adoption, customary care and kinship families and deliver on the express promise to Canadian families in your mandate letter, by swiftly implementing a new attachment benefits program in Budget 2020.

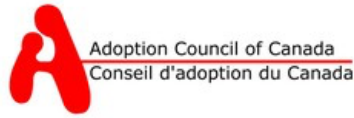
Sincerely,



Julie Despaties
Executive Director & Founder
Adopt4Life



Cathy Murphy
Executive Director
Adoption Council of Canada



The following organizations have supported the creation of a new 15-week attachment benefit program, as recommended by **#TimeToAttach**.

Tedd Konya, Chair of the Board
Adopt4Life
Ontario

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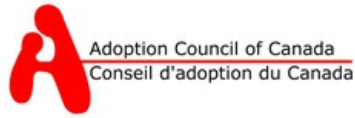
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Additionally, the following **individuals, professionals, and private practitioners**, all support the creation of a new 15-week attachment benefit program, as recommended by **#TimeToAttach**.

Carolyn MacLeod, Professor and Chair
Western University
Ontario

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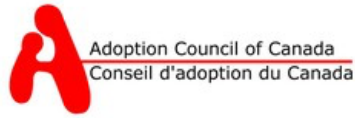
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